



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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January 3, 1984

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PRESIDENT

Professor Dr. Erhard Geissler
Zentralinstitut für Molekularbiologie
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Robert Rossle Strasse 10
DDR-1115 Berlin-Buch
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Dear Professor Geissler:

I am responding to your letter of October 5th asking for information on genetic engineering in relation to biological weaponry.

I am not sure I can identify the State Department "statement" mentioned in your letter: I was asked for my opinion and I do enclose a statement that I prepared some years ago during the drafting of the Biological Warfare Disarmament Treaty.

At this time, it seems to me that the greatest problem is the enforcement of the Treaty as it stands, since hope of that enforcement in this field of arms control depends on the cooperation of the signatories. This has been blatantly lacking on the part of the Soviet Union during the last few years. Whatever substance may be the historical verdict on anthrax in Sverdlovsk or the use of mycotoxins in Southeast Asia, failure to cooperate in the investigation of these incidents must leave unchecked the speculations that they have aroused.

The global dangers of the use of biological agents in warfare are already so immense that I would put the greater stress on what can already be foreseen with existing agents of disease. The further engineering of biological disease agents does pose a still graver threat, primarily as it may enhance the motivation (and I would still see proliferation to smaller countries and sub-state terror as the greatest hazards) to gain military advantage through the clandestine use of BW.

CC: M. Kulak

Professor Dr. Erhard Geissler
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I will ask you, if you do quote my remarks at all, to make sure to include my view that the enforceability of existing international agreements is of the most immediate concern. Further technical possibilities opened up by the unlawful application of newer biotechnology should not distract from that imperative.

As I assume you would still be interested in getting official U.S. statements on this subject I suggest that you write to Dr. Robert Mikulak, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, MA/AT Room 5499, Washington, D.C. 20451.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

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